

# SETSCoP Meeting Summary Communique

## Health & Mental Health Subgroup – 14 November 2024

Secretariat: The Social Policy Group (SPG)

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### Stillbirth Project Presentation

- Resources such as slides, a stakeholder kit, and information on stillbirth were shared to support awareness and prevention efforts within migrant and refugee communities.
    - > Resources available at: <https://healthyhorizons.org.au/downloadable-resources/>
    - > [Stakeholder Kit available](#)
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### 1. Health and Cultural Challenges

- **Cultural Tensions with Healthcare Systems:** Communities such as Afghan migrants face challenges navigating Australian medical systems due to unfamiliarity with emergency protocols, resulting in delays in seeking care.
- **Dietary Adjustments:** Some providers have noted that the shift to a more processed-food diet has affected the health of clients—in response, some programs aim to connect clients with culturally familiar foods, produce and vendors.
- **Community-Based Education:** Health education initiatives have introduced culturally specific sessions on preventive care, such as breast and colon cancer screenings, improving confidence in accessing such services.

### 2. Mental Health and Settlement

- **Migration-Related Trauma:** The impacts of trauma, family separation, and migration stress were highlighted as affecting emotional well-being, particularly among children.
- **Stigma as a Barrier:** Cultural taboos around mental health impede access to services, with many unaware of available resources or hesitant to engage due to fear of judgment.
- **Social Connections:** Programs that include gardening, cooking, and other group activities have been effective in fostering mental well-being and building resilience.
- **Financial Pressures and Housing Stress:** Limited bulk-billing services and the ongoing housing crisis exacerbate mental health challenges, particularly among refugee and humanitarian clients.

### 3. Access to Health Services

- **Interpreter and Accessibility Issues:** Limited access to interpreters in health clinics and remote areas continues to pose challenges for many, compounding already strained access to healthcare services.
- **Systemic Barriers:** Visa restrictions prevent some migrants from accessing Medicare and other essential health services, creating additional financial and emotional stress.
- **NDIS Navigation:** Cultural stigma and complexity of the National Disability Insurance Scheme process limit access to disability support for many in newly arrived communities.
- **Delayed and Limited Access to Services:** Prolonged waiting times for public dental and vision services, compounded by a lack of interpreters, are significant barriers.

#### 4. At-Risk Cohorts

- **Youth Mental Health Challenges:** Adolescents are increasingly experiencing mental health concerns, particularly around issues of identity and belonging. The lack of accessible and affordable mental health support for youth was a recurring theme.
- **Social Isolation:** Elderly community members and LGBTQI+ migrants often face isolation due to language barriers, stigma, and systemic inadequacies, heightening mental health risks.

#### 5. SETS Workers

- **Support for Practitioners:** SETS workers, many of whom carry lived experiences of trauma, need enhanced support systems to prevent burnout and secondary trauma.

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### Program Examples

- **Community Playgroups:** Initiatives like "It Takes a Village" are fostering inclusive environments for families, offering parenting support, and addressing mental health concerns through tailored programs.
- **Culturally Relevant Therapies:** Programs utilising art and sensory-based therapies, including the "Big Box of Feelings" toolkit, are helping families develop healthy emotional habits.
- **Foundation House Collaboration:** Six-session programs addressing mental health are being co-developed, focusing on trauma recovery and resource navigation.

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### Strategies and Future Directions

- **Breaking Mental Health Stigma**
  - > Use culturally sensitive approaches and visual aids to create safe, supportive environments for discussing mental health.
  - > Encourage open conversations about topics often seen as taboo, building trust through community-led initiatives.
- **Strengthening Program Delivery**
  - > Expand culturally specific health and mental health services, including cancer awareness workshops and community social programs.
  - > Secure ongoing funding to ensure the sustainability of effective health initiatives.
- **Advocacy and Collaboration**
  - > Collaborate with agencies such as Foundation House and community health organisations to improve access to culturally tailored mental health services.
  - > Advocate for systemic changes to reduce wait times and increase accessibility in public health services.

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### Outcomes

- **Resource Sharing:** Relevant materials, including presentations on stillbirth awareness and mental health toolkits, will be made available to SETSCoP members.
  - > [SETS Mental Health Referrals Resource](#): Practical resource for SETS practitioners
- **Health & Mental Health Referral:** Pathways to strengthening mainstream services referrals
- **Addressing stigma amongst migrant and refugee communities:** Opportunities for partnerships with people with lived experience (addressing different dimensions of health and mental health)

- **SETS Provider Staff Mental Wellbeing:** Professional support sessions.
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**Attendees (31 Participants / 20 SETS Organisations):**

Nick Ross (SPG – SETSCoP Secretariat)  
Chai Oonnakat (SPG – SETSCoP Secretariat)  
Marta Jasinska (SPG)  
Lynette Phuong (SPG)

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Alexis (MRC Tas)  
Amanda (Intereach VIC)  
Asmeret (Multicultural Australia QLD)  
Aya (MWA NSW)  
Carmen (Assyrian Australia Association NSW)  
Cassandra (Interreach VIC)  
Leticia (MCS VIC)  
Grace (Communicare WA)  
Gula (AWOV VIC)  
Hafiz (VAAN VIC)  
Ian (MCS VIC)  
Ira (Centacare FNQ – QLD)  
Jaweria (AMWCHR VIC)  
Keirnan (Multicultural Australia QLD)  
Lauren (54 Reasons VIC)  
Lydia (SECL VIC)  
Mariam (Arabic Welfare VIC)  
Marian (54 Reasons VIC)  
Phoebe (MRC Tas)  
Ranju (Sydney MCS NSW)  
Richard (AWECC VIC)  
Roula (Arabic Welfare VIC)  
Rowayda (Arabic Welfare VIC)  
Rowena (Wellsprings for Women VIC)  
Sammi (Intereach VIC)  
Sana (SECL VIC)  
Sara (WSM VIC)  
Sun (Melaleuca NT)  
Sweta (MRC Tas)  
Tariro (MRC Tas)  
Zaman (TBC)